

How to Become a Mother

By Sylbi Bae

First, decide to chase after your lifelong dream. Leave your friends and family and all that you've ever known. Your mom will give you \$200 and a bag of lessons learned. Your older sister says she must stay and take care of the family. Kiss the earth goodbye. Pack up and move to the American city they call "The Big Apple". Hope to take a refreshing bite. Feed your passion for fashion. Enroll in high school because you must speak English. Sit in the back, eat by yourself, and study quietly. You must finish. Apply for a job at "I'm Lovin' it" McDonald's. Eat too many burgers. And fries. Hate how you look. Sew some new clothes. Cut the front and back panels and while you're at it, sketch some new designs that have been playing jump rope in the back of your mind. Try it on. It doesn't fit the same anymore. Make a friend. Preferably a gay one. He is so eager and bright and full of American life. Realize there's plenty to go around. Take some. Explore the city with him, stay out too late, down three too many. Discover there's more to you than what met your mind's eye.

Finally graduate high school and quit "I'm Lovin' it". Apply for a fashion community college nearby and within your budget. Wait at the subway station. There you meet a man that looks like he could be from back home but also has a kind of foreign demeanor. He introduces you to the Korean Americans in Flushing, Queens. He's attractive, gets along with the others, and is full of American life. Apparently, you caught his eye first. You've dated his friend, but they've long been estranged at this point. He misses Korea too but also doesn't. He invites you to his apartment. Well, it's not his, but his friends told him to "*Make yourself at home*". You do the same. His friends seem outgoing but ignorant and it's difficult to keep up with their fast mouths. But at least you have him. Get pregnant. Give birth to a tiny alien girl in Flushing Hospital in the early days of May.

Move to Seattle. There's an aunt there who raised your cousins and can help you with yours. She agrees to house you and your maternal dreams. The father's boss needs him to stay in town just a bit longer. He has more to learn in the dental lab if he wants to support the baby. But he's diligent and can work through the night. You call him to tell him about his little girl and her silly habits. He's been absent for so much. He will soon be present at her 100th day ceremony. Start writing in a diary. Not every day but occasionally whenever you're overflowed with so much love and light that it inevitably soaks the ink on the pages. Write about how she sleeps peacefully at night, ask if she understands her mother's gratefulness, wish her an abundant life, and promise her the world. Say you won't make the same mistakes as your parents did. They also had you when they were young but not as young as you. Think *When she reads this what will our relationship be like?*